

Memorial Day 2005

Today we honor the selfless contributions to our great nation made by Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coastguardsmen of many generations. The words above the entrance to Arlington National Cemetery capture it well – “Not for fame or reward, not for place or rank, not lured by ambition or goaded by necessity, but in simple obedience to duty as they understood it, they suffered all, sacrificed all, dared all and died.” All of them are familiar to us, because we know something of what was in their hearts, something of their dreams – they were all Americans who “gave their tomorrow for our today” to preserve the freedoms, opportunities and basic optimism that make America such a beacon of hope and inspiration for millions of less fortunate people worldwide, and such a special place to call home.

This Memorial Day finds our Army and Nation engaged in the 4th year of the Global War on Terrorism, against an extremist insurgency that hates and fears the basic principles upon which America was founded: what we stand for, not what we do. This war is more personal than previous wars; our enemy does not represent a nation, only evil. They have killed thousands of our own citizens and many thousands of innocent men, women and children from other nations and societies. They seek to destroy the free, democratic, pluralistic way of life we take for granted and substitute a lightless religious totalitarianism of their own design.

They will not succeed. Our military is helping write a new, hopeful chapter in human history in partnership with civilized forces from around the world. As President Bush noted “It is our task; the task of this generation [the greatest generation of the 21st century] to respond to aggression and terror. We have no other choice. There is no other peace.” As we gather on Memorial Day, over 350,000 men and women of America’s Armed Forces remain deployed in harm’s way in over 120 countries around the globe, over half in the Middle East. A few weeks ago, I visited INSCOM Soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and in the Gulf – they’re performing magnificently under very tough conditions to control the violence and help decent, disadvantaged people live a better life. Joined by like-minded Coalition partners – especially our British and Australian allies, our Soldiers accomplish incredible tasks as a matter of routine. They accept the significant associated risks for the sake of fellow comrades-in-arms, their families, our Nation and generations to come. The Soldiers who’ve come before them can be proud – these warriors have carried forward the finest traditions of selfless-sacrifice and service from the past.

Today we pause to remember; we remember America’s fallen heroes across the generations – at Arlington and hundreds of small parks and cemeteries across the Nation and overseas. These ceremonies are America’s way of paying respect and saying “Thank You.” Each memorial stone and simple limestone tablet reflects American values – a profound understanding that “Freedom isn’t Free” – and proof of America’s commitment to a decent life for all people. At the Nolan building, we’re also surrounded by monuments, a grey granite memorial dedicated to fallen Army Security Agency Soldiers, lost during operations in Korea, Dominican Republic and Vietnam. Next to it sets a dark granite monument that commemorates the sacrifice of INSCOM Soldiers since that time –

losses from the Pan Am bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland and in operations in Colombia and Iraq. This year, we add three new names to the INSCOM monument; three of our best who made the ultimate sacrifice in support of combat operations in Iraq. We celebrate their lives and contributions.

- Chief Warrant Officer 2 Christopher G. Nason was a great MI Soldier, leader and expert linguist who took on the toughest tasks without blinking to support Joint and combined operations across Iraq. Chris was actually assigned to the U.S. Army Intelligence Center and School at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., but volunteered for duty in Iraq as part of INSCOM's forward team to ensure provision of critical linguist support. He performed his duties superbly. His buddies called him a "Soldier's Soldier," a term that holds special meaning within the Army family; reserved for our very best as a sign of deep respect and admiration. There is no higher compliment. Chief Nason was killed in a tragic vehicle accident in northern Iraq on Nov. 23, 2003. Chris made a profound, positive difference – we won't forget.
- Sgt. Cari Ann Gasiewicz was a member of B Company, 202nd MI Battalion, 513th MI Brigade. She was a brilliant, charismatic Arabic linguist and tough, no-nonsense professional Soldier; completely dedicated to her job and her "mates." Respected and admired by subordinates, peers and seniors alike as an aggressive, positive, highly competent leader. She "made intelligence happen" through sheer hard work and relentless drive under the toughest conditions. Cari Ann lost her life when the convoy she volunteered to be part of was attacked with two road-side improvised explosive devices on Dec. 4, 2004, the only fatality suffered by the battalion during its year long deployment in that high threat environment. She touched the lives of everyone who knew her. With unlimited potential for success in any career field – she *chose* to be a Soldier. We couldn't be more proud of her.
- Sgt. Maj. Robert Odell was a world-class communications leader and expert "operator" in the fullest sense. Deployed shortly after his arrival in INSCOM, he anchored key communications nodes in northern Iraq with absolute distinction. He was killed, along with a number of other Soldiers, during a suicide explosive attack in the main dining facility in Mosul on Dec. 21, 2004. He leaves behind a terrific wife, Cynthia, and three beautiful children under the age of five. "Odie" ranked among the very best. He was proud of what he did; his legacy is the generation of Soldiers he coached and mentored forward for full success. INSCOM, our Army and Nation are proud to have had him among our ranks.

For over 220 years, our Army has served as the Nation's shield against terror and tyranny. That proud, "no-fail" tradition has been passed on from generation to generation with immense pride. The Soldiers and civilians in our ranks are more than meeting the standards set by their predecessors.

Today, we celebrate and honor the lives, contributions and sacrifices made by the men and women of our Army and Armed Forces throughout the years on our behalf. We will never forget them or their families; we will keep them in our hearts, thoughts and prayers; this

day and every day. Thinking of our recent and tragic losses, I want each of you to go that extra mile to keep safe, take care of each other and rededicate yourself to making the world a more stable, safer, better place in their memory.

God bless America!